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REACH Newsletter | June Edition

Welcome to our latest newsletter! We're excited to bring you updates on what's been happening at Reach AK and what's coming up. *Let's dive in!*



Peer Power Participation: Niall & Robert



Niall and Robert recently attended Peer Power, a program dedicated to promoting the civil rights, leadership, and self-determination of Alaskans with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Through education, connection, and peer-led action, Peer Power empowers individuals to speak up, build confidence, and take active roles in their communities.

We are proud of Niall and Robert for engaging in this important opportunity and continuing to grow their self-advocacy skills and community involvement.



Special Olympics Basketball State Games Spotlight!

We are excited to share some amazing news. Kai, Andres, and Jacob have been selected to represent at the Special Olympics Basketball State Games taking place June 5–7 in Anchorage!

This is a wonderful achievement that reflects their hard work, dedication, and teamwork. We are incredibly proud of their accomplishment and can't wait to cheer them on as they compete at the state level.

Join us in celebrating Kai, Andres, and Jacob as they showcase their skills and represent our community with pride!





MORE THAN A PLAYGROUP: BUILDING COMMUNITY FOR ILP FAMILIES

Every Thursday from 10:30–11:30 a.m., ILP families gather at REACH for a special music playgroup led by Christine. These sessions provide a welcoming space where children can explore, play, and connect while families build community and support with one another.

Before one of the music groups, a family shared their anxiety about attending because they had never brought their child to a public group setting before. They were uncertain how he would respond around other children, particularly given his neurodivergence and significant sensory processing challenges. At home, he often becomes very distressed if another person touches his toys. Although the family arrived 30 minutes late due to their apprehension, they ultimately decided to attend.

When they arrived at REACH, their home provider was there waiting to offer emotional support. As the family entered the playroom, their son immediately became excited. He ran directly toward Christine's guitar and eagerly attempted to play it. From that moment on, he enthusiastically explored the room, moving from toy to toy while occasionally observing the five other children present. As the session continued, it was noticeable that the parents began to relax. They slowly settled in and started connecting with another parent in the group.

Their child was thriving in the environment. He did not become upset with the other children, and when another child picked up a toy he had been using, he calmly moved on to something else. Much of the time he played independently, occasionally returning to the musical instruments. Whenever Christine began playing music again, he would stop and watch intently, clearly enjoying the experience.

Because the parents felt comfortable sharing their initial fears about attending, another family opened up about having had similar concerns. This led to a meaningful conversation between the two families, who quickly formed a supportive connection. Together, they discussed attending a local American Sign Language class with their children.

By the end of the group, all of the families and children left smiling. The experience served as a valuable reminder for everyone involved that fear and uncertainty can sometimes lead us to anticipate negative outcomes or avoid new situations altogether. However, when we take a chance and step outside of our comfort zones, the outcome can often be far more positive than expected.

We are grateful to Christine and all of the families who make Thursday Music Group such a welcoming and supportive space for everyone.



REACH CINCO DE MAYO POTLUCK CELEBRATION

REACH office staff came together to celebrate Cinco de Mayo with a fun and festive potluck filled with great food and shared laughter. Cinco de Mayo honors Mexican heritage and culture, making it a wonderful opportunity to connect and celebrate as a team.

A special thank you to Tamara and the Fun Committee for organizing such a wonderful celebration—and to everyone who contributed and made it so special!





Support Services Spotlight: Qin Zhou's Outstanding Service

We would like to recognize Qin Zhou for her outstanding work as a Direct Support Professional. Qin consistently demonstrates professionalism, strong communication, and genuine care in all that she does.

She builds positive relationships with the individuals she supports and her coworkers, and she regularly takes initiative to go above and beyond in her role.

As shared by Timothy Wilson:

"Qin has been a Support Services Staff for several years, and has always been an outstanding DSP. She comes with a very strong set of professional and interpersonal skills that keep her relationship with her individuals and coworkers strong. She takes on extra responsibility without having to be asked, and communicates very well. She always strives to do her very best every day, and we wouldn't be able to provide the quality services we do without people like her involved. We appreciate her greatly."

Thank you, Qin, for your dedication and the positive impact you bring to REACH every day!



REACH Participates in Juneau Maritime Festival 2026

REACH participated in the Juneau Maritime Festival in downtown Juneau on May 9. The festival brought together community members, local organizations, and visitors to celebrate Juneau's maritime culture and heritage, while highlighting the strong connection between the community, the waterfront, and local industries.

REACH staff enjoyed connecting with attendees, sharing information about our programs and services, and engaging with the community throughout the day. We are grateful for the opportunity to take part in this meaningful local event and appreciate everyone who stopped by to connect with us.



Congratulations to Our Staff Appreciation Winner, Rebecca Brewer!

Please join us in congratulating our Staff Appreciation winner, Rebecca Brewer!

Rebecca has gone above and beyond in her role, consistently demonstrating dedication, compassion, and initiative. Most recently, she stepped up by taking her individual out to the rivers around Haines for Eulachon fishing, creating a meaningful and memorable experience in addition to all of her other stellar work.

Her commitment to supporting the individuals we serve and her willingness to go the extra mile truly embody the spirit of our organization.

Thank you, Rebecca, for all that you do.

EMPLOYEES MARKING ANOTHER YEAR OF DEDICATION

We're incredibly proud of the hardworking people who work at REACH, and their dedication does not go unnoticed! Please join us in celebrating the following employee anniversaries for the month of June:

Chelsea Kelly - 23 years
Alfredo Capada - 15 years
Matthew Talley - 11 years
Agnes Elizarde - 11 years
Sylvia Johnson - 5 years
Justin Roberts - 5 years

Chevelle Hogan - 5 years
Jimmie J Holland - 3 years
Charina Laguidao - 3 years
Justin McKoy - 2 years

WELCOME TO THE TEAM!

Please help us extend a warm welcome to our new employees who recently joined the REACH team! We are excited to have you join our awesome organization and bring your skills to the people and businesses we serve:

Abby Jones - Group Home Manager
Victoria Hingira - DSP

CHEERS TO OUR JUNE BIRTHDAY CELEBRANTS!

This month, we're celebrating the birthdays of some of our amazing employees! Join us in recognizing their special day and wishing them joy, success, and a fantastic year ahead.

Martin Reid - June 02	Rebecca Brewer - June 18
Sara Muehlberg - June 5	Brandon Rindlisbacher - June 20
Corazon Acosta - June 5	Andrew Conteh - June 24
Joanne Sam - June 10	Alfredo Capada - June 25
Sylvia Johnson - June 12	Jared Jack-Hunter - June 25
Pauline James - June 12	Matthew Jones - June 29
Nympha Lopez - June 14	
Carissa Heath - June 16	



HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

Please note that REACH Shredding and the REACH main office will be closed for the holiday.

OFFICE NOTICE
CLOSURE

JUNETEENTH

Please note that REACH Shredding and the REACH main office will be closed on Friday, June 19, 2025, in observance of Juneteenth.



June 19
Memorial Day

UPCOMING COMMUNITY EVENTS

June

JUNE 1ST - 6PM-9PM

MONDAY BOARD GAME NIGHT - DEVIL'S CLUB BREWING (100 N. FRANKLIN ST)

Free, all ages- Come join, or bring a board game to share!
Every Monday, June 1st, 8th, 15th, 22nd, 29th - 6pm-9pm

JUNE 3RD - 6TH 9A-9P

CELEBRATION - CENTENNIAL HALL AREA

Dance performances, art market, exhibits and workshops!

JUNE 5TH - 4:30P-7P

FIRST FRIDAY ART WALK - DOWNTOWN AREA

Art viewing and activities, music, lots of walking!

JUNE 6TH - 2PM-4PM

SILENT BOOK CLUB - MENDENHALL LIBRARY

Calm and friendly, 1 hour of silent reading, BYOB (book)!

JUNE 7TH - 1PM-3PM

JUNEAU SIP N STITCH - HERITAGE COFFEE (MENDENHALL MALL ROAD)

Fiber arts enthusiasts, bring a project and buy a cup of coffee!

JUNE 10TH - 530P-630P

ART CREATIVE MENTAL HEALTH GROUP - NAMI (8711 TEAL ST SUITE 200)

Free peer-led simple art activities with mental health focus!

JUNE 12TH - 5P-7P

FIBER FRIDAY - HEADS IN THE CLOUDS COLLECTIVE STUDIO (ARCTICORP BLDG 418 HARRIS ST RM 403)

Bring a craft and join other fiber artists. Knitting, crochet, spinning, weaving, sewing, etc! Every 2nd and 4th Friday, 5-7pm

JUNE 13TH - 8A-10A

BIRD WALK - JUNEAU AUDUBON SOCIETY (EAGLE BEACH)

Free, bird watching walk the enjoy different birds at Eagle Beach!

JUNE 18TH - 530P-730P

MINI FIG PAINT & SIP - RIDDLE VALLEY GAMES (DEVIL'S CLUB BREWERY)

Free, Miniature figurine painting workshop. Bring supplies or borrow from Riddle Valley Games!

JUNE 20TH-21ST - 10A-5P

GOLD RUSH DAYS - SANDY BEACH

Competitions, local food, vendor booths, games, music!

JUNE 24TH 11A-1230P

SENIOR CHAIR YOGA & LUNCH - JUNEAU SENIOR CENTER

60+ only - Free low-impact chair yoga and lunch provided at 11:45!

Every Wednesday - June 3rd, 10th, 17th, 24th - 11am-1130am (Lunch 11:45a)

JUNE 27TH - 12P-4PM

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE OPEN HOUSE - 8500 MENDENHALL LOOP RD

Learn about NWS and emergency preparedness, tour their facility, and of course science!



You're Invited to the Juneteenth Cookout!
SAVE THE DATE!
Saturday, June 20th | from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.
at **The Buoy Deck** | 345 Egan Drive, Juneau, AK

We're firing up the grill with all the sides.
Join us for a day of connection, celebration, and solidarity!

DETAILS TBA

Sponsored by the Black Awareness Association of Juneau



June is Alzheimer's & Brain Awareness Month

5 Tips for Supporting People with Alzheimer's

1. Be Patient and Present

Offer calm presence, listen gently, and avoid rushing conversations.

2. Use simple, clear language

Offer calm presence, listen gently, and avoid rushing conversations.

3. Maintain routine and familiarity

Familiar routines, places, and people help create comfort and reduce confusion.

4. Focus on emotion, not just facts

Even when memory fades, feelings remain—comfort and kindness go a long way.

5. Encourage independence when possible

Even when memory fades, feelings remain—comfort and kindness go a long way.

Why It Matters

Alzheimer's disease is a progressive condition that affects memory, thinking, and behavior, impacting not only individuals but also their families and caregivers. Raising awareness helps reduce stigma, encourages early detection, and promotes support for those navigating life with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia.

Did You Know?

- Alzheimer's disease is the most common cause of dementia, affecting memory, thinking, and behavior
- More than 55 million people worldwide are living with dementia, and this number is expected to rise.
- While there is currently no cure, early diagnosis and support can significantly improve quality of life.

Quote of the Month

"Memory is the diary we all carry about with us." – Oscar Wilde

For individuals living with Alzheimer's, memories may fade in and out, but the need for connection, dignity, and kindness never changes. A familiar voice, a patient pause, or a gentle smile can create comfort even when words or memories feel out of reach. Let's continue to show understanding, compassion, and patience—because even when memories change, the feeling of being cared for can still remain.





Aphasia Awareness Month: When Words Don't Come Easily

Aphasia Awareness Month highlights a communication disorder that can affect speaking, understanding, reading, or writing, while leaving a person's intelligence unchanged. Often caused by stroke or brain injury, aphasia looks different for everyone—some people may struggle to find words, while others may use gestures or alternative ways to communicate. This month is a reminder to be patient, listen with care, and give people the time and space they need to express themselves, because every voice matters in its own way.

Autistic Pride Day: Different, Not Less

What if the way someone sees the world isn't something to fix—but something to value?

On June 18, Autistic Pride Day celebrates autism as a meaningful part of human diversity. It's a day to recognize autistic people for who they are—their strengths, perspectives, and lived experiences—not just labels.

Autistic Pride is about being seen, heard, and accepted without needing to hide or change who you are. It's about creating spaces where differences are respected and all forms of communication and connection are valued.

When we listen, understand, and make room for different ways of experiencing the world, we build communities where autistic people truly belong.



Juneteenth: Honoring Freedom

Juneteenth, observed on June 19, commemorates the end of slavery in the United States and honors the ongoing journey toward freedom, equality, and justice. It is a time to reflect on history, recognize the strength and resilience of Black communities, and understand how the past continues to shape the present.

Today, Juneteenth also calls us to listen, learn, and have meaningful conversations about equity and inclusion. It reminds us that progress is ongoing, and building a more just future is a shared responsibility.





BEAR SAFETY

From the desk of Shane Walker, American Heart Association CPR First Aid Instructor.

With spring in full bloom and snow, finally, getting scarce our furry neighbors are waking up and emerging again. The State of Alaska Department of Fish & Game has reminders for staying safe in bear country.

Alaska is one of the few places in the world where all three species of bear live. Brown bears are nearly everywhere. Black bears inhabit most forests. Polar bears frequent the sea ice and tundra in extreme northern and western Alaska.

Bears are curious, intelligent and tend to avoid or ignore people. Respecting bears and learning proper behavior can help you avoid conflict.

First, avoid problems. Never approach bears. Give female bears extra space. Female bears especially react if you are perceived as a threat to their cubs. When photographing bears use a telephoto lens. Bears, like humans, use trails and roads. Do not set up camp close to a trail they might use.

Second, do not surprise a bear. Make noise, sing, or talk loudly to let bears know you are there. Avoid thick brush whenever possible. Hike in a group, groups are easier for bears to detect.

Third, don't feed bears. Keep garbage cans clean and sealed. Don't let them learn that human food or garbage is an easy meal. Keep a clean camp. Wash your dishes. Avoid smelly and greasy foods such as bacon or smoked fish. Remember that pets and their food can also attract bears.

How to deal with close encounters.

If a bear notices you, face the bear, stand your ground, and talk to it calmly. Let the bear know you are human. Talk in a normal voice. Try to appear larger by standing close to others or wave your arms slowly above your head. Try to back away slowly, but if the bear follows, stop and hold your ground.

If a bear can't tell what you are, it may come closer or stand on its hind legs to get a better look or smell. A standing bear is usually curious, not threatening. If you take the above actions and the bear continues to focus on you or approach, you should become more assertive. Raise your voice, beat on pans, use noisemakers, throw rocks or sticks.

NEVER RUN. You cannot outrun a bear. Bears can run much faster than a sprinter and, like dogs. They will chase fleeing animals. A charging bear might come within a few feet before running off. It is important to stand your ground.

In summary:

- Make noise so you don't surprise a bear. Stay alert and look for signs of bears.
- Never approach or crowd bears; respect their "personal space."
- Keep food, garbage and other attractants out of reach of bears.
- Stay calm during a bear encounter. Ready your deterrent. Stand your ground, group up with others and alert the bear by talking calmly. Don't run

SCAN ME



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